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ABSTRACT

People high in self-monitoring and sensation-seeking tend to be gregarious. For the self-monitor, social interaction is a means to the end of influencing others, and for the sensation-seeker it is a valuable source of stimulation. The present study explored the extent that the two constructs overlap by examining correlations between scores on the Revised Self-Monitoring Scale (RSMS) and Forms IV and V of the Sensation-Seeking Scale (SSS). Another aim of the study was to compare scores earned by individuals of different ages. College students (N=84) completed the RSMS and the SSS or just the RSMS. Results showed a significant relationship between self-monitoring and sensation-seeking. With regard to age, sensation-seeking seemed to decrease with age, possibly after age 24. This finding is consistent with research showing that sensation-seeking peaks during the teenage years and then decreases with age. It appears that the ability to modify one's self-presentation accounts for most of the overlap between self-monitoring and sensation seeking. Evidence from the study suggest that the significant positive relationship observed between self-monitoring and sensation seeking is real. (LLL)

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Title: A developmental analysis of self-monitoring and sensation-seeking

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I. Introduction: In a chapter entitled "Personality and social behavior," Snyder (1987) noted that individuals tend to prefer situations which permit behavioral expression of their characteristic dispositions. Although most of his discussion focuses on self-monitoring, other dispositions are mentioned, including sensation-seeking. Self-monitoring and sensation-seeking resemble each other in that people high in each tend to be gregarious; for the self-monitor, social interaction is a means to the end of influencing others, whereas to the sensation-seeker it is a valuable source of stimulation. The present study seeks to answer the question "To what extent do the two constructs overlap?" by examining correlations between scores on the Revised Self-Monitoring Scale (RSMS; Lennox & Wolfe, 1984) and Forms IV and V of the Sensation-Seeking Scale (SSS; Zuckerman, 1979).

The RSMS has two subscales, designated Ability to modify self-presentation and Sensitivity to others' expressive behavior; self-monitoring score is the sum of these. Each form of the SSS contains four subscales: Thrill-seeking, Experience-seeking, Disinhibition, and Boredom susceptibility. A general sensation-seeking score is obtained on Form IV from selected items; on Form V, Total Sensation-seeking Score is the sum of the four subscales (40 items).

Another aim of the present study is to compare scores earned by individuals of different ages. Allen (1986) found that subjects in the 16 to 18 age range scored significantly higher on the Ability to Modify Self-

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presentation subscale of the RSMS than did subjects aged 21 to 34. Zuckerman (1979, pp.122-123) reported that sensation-seeking increases with age until some time in adolescence and then declines with age. The same patterns should emerge here.

Lennox (1985) notes that the ability to modify self-presentation is a better predictor, not only of what it is supposed to predict (i.e., encoding of social information), but also of what the Sensitivity subscale is supposed to predict (i.e., decoding of social information). Therefore, an analysis of the RSMS and its subscales may be informative. Forms IV and V of Zuckerman's measure, and the four subscales of each, will also be analyzed to evaluate his claims about the superiority of form V.

II. Method and Results. Summer session students at Genesee Community College (n=42) completed the RSMS and Forms IV and V of Zuckerman's SSS, and another 42 summer session students at SUNY Geneseo completed just the RSMS. RSMS means from the two colleges did not differ significantly; the two subsamples were therefore combined for examination of age trends and self-monitoring. Age range was 18 to 51 in the Genesee Community College subsample and 18 to 50 in the SUNY Geneseo subsample.

Zuckerman notes (1979, p. 111) that the total score for the SSS, Form V, is slightly more reliable than the general score for the SSS, Form IV. The values of coefficient alpha observed here (see Table 1) are in line with his conclusion.

Table 2 presents Pearson rs and partial rs. The total score of the

RSMS for the 42 Community College subjects correlates significantly with General SSS score of Form IV ($r_{TotRSMS \times GenSSSIV} = .35$, $p < .05$) and with the Total SSS score of Form V ($r_{TotRSMS \times TotSSSV} = .40$, $p < .01$). Thrill-seeking also correlates with the Total RSMS scores, ($r_{ThrSSSIV \times TotRSMS} = .41$, $p < .01$ and $r_{ThrSSSV \times TotRSMS} = .40$, $p < .01$), as does the Boredom susceptibility subscale of Form IV ($r = .38$, $p < .05$). The scores on the two subscales of the RSMS, Ability and Sensitivity, as well as the Total scores on RSMS vary differentially with scores on all scales of the SSS, Forms IV and SSSV (see tables 2a and 2b).

Pearson rs (n=42) show that age is negatively correlated with scores on the General scale of SSS, Form IV, and with scores on the Total score of the SSS, Form V. The age correlation is significant ($p < .05$) for scores on the Thrill-seeking subscale of SSSIV ($r = -.36$), the Thrill-seeking subscale of SSSV ($r = -.32$) and the Disinhibition subscale of SSSV ($r = -.31$). The partial rs displayed in table 2b show that removing effects of age does not reduce these correlations by much.

t-tests on age groups of 18 to 24 (n=44) and 25 to 51 (n=40) yielded significant differences for Total scores on the RSMS ($p < .05$). Age differences for scores on the Ability and Sensitivity subscales of the RSMS approached significance (Ability, $p < .08$; Sensitivity, $p < .10$). Thrill-seeking of SSSIV ($p < .01$), Thrill-seeking of SSSV ($p < .05$), Disinhibition of SSSV ($p < .05$).

III. Implications. The data show a significant relationship between self-monitoring and sensation-seeking. With regard to age, sensation-seeking

seems to decrease with age, possibly after 24. This finding is consistent with Zuckerman's observation that sensation-seeking peaks during the teen years and then decreases with age. This pattern is consistent with Allen's (1986) finding for age differences in self-monitoring. The Ability and Sensitivity subscale scores of the RSMS tend to differ on how they contribute to the total RSMS scores. It appears that the ability to modify one's self-presentation accounts for most of self-monitoring's overlap with sensation-seeking. Three kinds of evidence suggests that the significant positive relationship observed here between self-monitoring and sensation-seeking is real, or at least not likely to be due to some of the artifacts that can influence the magnitude of intertest *r*s. First, RSMS uses a six-point Likert format, whereas, both forms of the SSS have a forced-choice format. Second, inspection of the scales' items reveals no overlapping content. Third, although scores on self-monitoring and sensation-seeking are similarly associated with age, the partialling out of age has little effect on the correlation between them. These facts imply that our findings will be able to withstand attempts at replication.

IV. References.

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Table 1: Coefficient Alphas for subscales of Revised Self-Monitoring Scale and Sensation Seeking Scales, forms IV and V.

SELF-MONITORING SCALE	# of items	Alpha
Ability	7	.78
Sensitivity	6	.73
Total	13	.78
SENSATION SEEKING SCALE IV		
Thrill-seeking	14	.84
Experience-seeking	18	.57
Disinhibition	14	.75
Boredom Susceptibility	18	.47
General Sensation Seeking	21	.81
SENSATION SEEKING SCALE V		
Thrill-seeking	10	.86
Experience-seeking	10	.67
Disinhibition	10	.72
Boredom Susceptibility	10	.43
Total	40	.83

Table 2a: Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Self-Monitoring and Sensation-Seeking (decimals omitted).

	SENSATION SEEKING									
	Form IV					Form V				
SELF-MONITORING	Thr	Exp	Dis	Bs	Gen	Thr	Exp	Dis	Bs	Tot
Ability	41**	26	23	31*	32*	42**	23	30	09	42**
Sensitivity	23	08	08	30	24	20	-02	09	28	20
Total Self-Monitoring	41**	23	20	38*	35*	40**	15	26	22	40**

Table 2b: Relationships Between Self-Monitoring and Sensation-Seeking with Effects of Age Removed (decimals omitted).

	SENSATION SEEKING									
	Form IV					Form V				
SELF-MONITORING	Thr	Exp	Dis	Bs	Gen	Thr	Exp	Dis	Bs	Tot
Ability	37**	27*	21	36*	32*	38**	29*	27*	16	42**
Sensitivity	25	09	09	32*	26	22	-01	10	32*	09
Total Self-Monitoring	06	23	19	42**	36*	39**	19	24	28*	41**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; two-tailed tests.

Thr = Thrill and adventure-seeking
Exp = Experience-seeking
Dis = Disinhibition
Bs = Boredom susceptibility
Gen = General sensation-seeking